

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Saturday, May 17. 1797.

WELL, Gentlemen, and what would you have the *Review* say to the Case of Importation of French Goods about the Union, for some Gentlemen are so hasty with me, they will not let me be quiet till I come to it of Course.

One of the three Heads I was coming to talk of in showing the mutual Obligation of the Kingdoms, was that of Commerce; but I am so importun'd about this Importation Act, that I must make Digression upon Digression, or be put to I know not what Charge every Day for Post-Letters; among several of which sent me already, I shall trouble you only with the following.

MR. REVIEW,

I Doubt not but you have heard of the great Struggle here for preventing the Importation of what Wine, Brandy, &c. comes into

Scotland before the 1st of May, and of the great Out-cry of the Merchants here upon this Occasion, in which as they have been balk'd by the Parliament, they make sad Lamentations and Out-cries of being undone, and I know not what. Now you being upon the Spot, it would be a very acceptable Piece of Service to the Publick to satisfy them a little about it, and particularly to some of your Friends, as well as

Your humble Servant.

A. O.

I confess, I have been often Times wondering at the extravagant Clamour rais'd in the South, (I must not say England now) about the prodigious Inundation of Wine, Brandy, and other French Goods, during the Interval of Time from the End of the Treaty to the 1st of May; and tho' indee^d

some serious Talk may be had of it at last, yet who can forbear making merry with it a while?

O send me Word, says one Gentleman, of the prodigious Quantity of Wine and Brandy, whereabouts it may amount! Above a Million Sterling says another, and an unheard of Fleet from *Holland* says a third; Pray, let us hear how many Ships they were?

It would make any Body wonder, how barren you are of Intelligence in *England*, that things should be so easily magnify'd, or that the Brokers should stock jobb you up to such monstrous Stories as these; I have given you some Account of the mighty Fleets come in; and the monstrous Quantities of Goods come along with them may be guess'd at, and by that Guess the Justice of the Complainers may be observ'd.

I hope, all those honest Gentlemen, who may have been impos'd upon by the Cabals and Clubs of Brokers and Wine Merchants, will not think themselves concern'd in this; but certainly the noisy Part of it has had several Originals from whence it sprung; and several Ends to which it drove; and of which I shall be very free to speak by it self.

But to return to our beloved Friends the Petitioners, Wine-sellers, for as for the Wine-bibbers, I dare say, they were not concern'd, they will be glad of the Claret, let it go how it will. The sad and lamentable News is of a great Fleet come into *Scotland*, lately so called, to the wonderful Loss, Ruin, and Destruction of Trade in *England*.

Why, says one, will you not own there is a vast great Fleet come in? Yes indeed, I will readily grant more than you ask: For I'll own there came in two great Fleets, and such Fleets as never arriv'd in the River of *Thames*; no not since *London-Bridge* was built, for there came in a great Fleet of Ships, and a great Fleet of WHALES.

Never was such a Fleet seen in the River of *Thames*; for the same Day the *Amsterdam* Fleet came in, there came up the FIRTH about two and thirty Sail of small Whales or *Grampus's*, which for Want of good Pilots run all on Shoar in *Kirkaldy* Bay just by the Town of *Kirkaldy*, on the other side of the Firth of *Edinburgh*.

Now, Gentlemen, if the People should take the Flesh, or *Blubber* as we call it, of these Sea-Monsters, and boyl it all into *French* Wine and Brandy, and bring it all away to *England*, your Case, who call yourselves fair Traders, would be sad and deplorable, and I am mighty sorry the Parliament is prorogued, and that you cannot present a Petition to them, you would certainly have obtain'd an Act to prevent, if needful, bringing all the Wine and Brandy, so boyl'd out of the Whales, into *South Britain*, only with a reasonable Exception for the *Scotts* Subjects.

It was really a strange Sight, and you would wonder at the mighty Prognostications, the learned South-layers of the North fixt our Heads with about it; One, *this wishes the Union at the D—l*, crys it is ominous to the Union, and the Union will not last above 32 Days, before it will be broke.—And he is mad to hear the Lords threw out the Bill; for, says he, if they had not, the Union had been broken *Ipso Facto*, and we had been all, as you were, Gentlemen, &c.

Another sighs, and tells us bad News, viz. That the QUEEN, GOD bless Her Majesty, will dye some time or other, and perhaps may not reign above 32 Years, according to the Number of the Fish: GOD forbid any body should flint Her Majesty, but I wish we were all secure of enjoying Her so long; I am perswaded, *French* Power, *Highb-Flyers*, Anti-Unioners, and that Sort of People and their Cause too, would then leave the World before Her Majesty, and She would live to see *Britain* flourish in Peace and Wealth, united at Home, and fear'd abroad, above the Power of Envy or Enemies to shake or disturb.

One was for running to our new Custom-House-Officers here at *Edinburgh*, to know if they were not prohibited Goods, because they could not find any Custom upon Whales in the Book of Rates.—And One cunninger than all the rest, was for having Searchers sent down with Lanthorns and Candles into their Insides, to see if they had not brought a vast Quantity of Wine and Brandy hither, contealed to steal the Custom.

And

And thus much for the Whales; for in that there is really some Wonder, but in the other part, (*viz.*) the Importation of Wine and Brandy, there is no Wonder at all—All the Ships from *Holland, France*, and every where else, according to the best Account I can get, will not make a hundred Sail, and among them I have seen but one that may be call'd a great Ship, the rest are all one with another from 50 to 80 Tun Burthen, Ketches, Doggers, and a few Galliot Pinks.

Among the Goods brought in this Fleet, there are great Quantities of Oyl, Whalebone, Starch, Dye-Stuffs, Pot-Ashes, Flax, Cordage, Prunes, and several whole Vessels loaden with Salt; most of which Commodities, the Whale-Fins excepted, are for the Country Expence, and will remain there: The Wine and Brandy is supposed to be most for *London*: Now had all these Ships come in fully loaded with Wine and Brandy, and every Pint of that Wine and Brandy went for *England*, yet was there no Occasion for such a Fright, such a Stop upon Trade, such a Sinking of Price, &c.

But this is all stock-jobbing the thing, and those Men of Art, the Brokers, are very ready to lay hold of such an Advantage——And had they gone on, they might have stock-jobb'd the Union too for ought I know, since their Delusions went a great way, and some of even the *Elect, Parliamentarily Speaking*, were deceiv'd by them.

And now the Show is over, and the Sluces are drawn up, prepare Gentlemen to swim in Claret, and have Brandy enough to turn the *Thames* into a Can of Flip; or what think you of the *Canal* in the Park, or *Rosamond's Pond* to be converted into a Bowl of Punch? Impertinent Stuff! What can all this come to? What can the Proportion be to the Wine drank in the City of *London* in one Year, and were the Quantity exactly known, what Proportion could it bear as to Abatement of Price in the whole?

When 'tis all come up and sold, how little a Portion of it shall we get in the Taverns, drawn unmix'd with *Spanish* and *Portuguese* Wines, and what must we give at the Old D—l for a Bottle of *Nett French* Wine, less than we did before?

If there be such a Fall of Wine, pray, *Gentlemen Vintners*, let us see a little of it at the Bar, let us feel it in the Reckoning, and let us talk no more of 3s. 6d. a Bottle, for what we get now in *Scotland* at 1s. 3d. a Quart.

'Tis hard, this Out-cry, which is really only stock-jobbing an Opportunity, should sink all the Merchants Prices, and not sink the Vintners Bottle; that the Merchant abates in Sale, and the Vintner keeps up his Draft, besides all the Advantages of Mixtures and Improvement.

I could go on here to expose a little ridiculous Joy, some People discover'd, that the publick Affair was brought to such a Crisis, and how much some pleas'd themselves with Hopes, the Union would receive its Crack in the Cradle here; that it should miscarry in the first Step, and that some of *Mr. Hodges's* two and thirty interfering Interests were come upon the Stage.

But their Delight is at last turn'd into Sorrow, and they have seen the Prophecy of this Union singularly exemplified, *viz.* That *England* would rather suffer great Inconveniences, than in the least seem to oppress or encroach upon their Neighbours.

Her Majesty's Concern also for this Affair is exceeding remarkable; and as it is a Proof of the QUEEN's tender Regard to Her Northern Dominions, that Her Majesty, with so much Cost to her Revenue, gave up this Cause, rather than give the least Shadow of Discontent to Her People; so I must say 'tis a Subject too great to begin at the Close of a Review, and therefore I shall reserve it to a more particular Observation.

Mean Time, Gentlemen Stock-jobbers, don't fright the World, do not trick the uneasie Merchant out of his Goods at a low Price, upon Pretence of a whole Spring-Tide of Wine and Brandy: Here are no Prodigies a coming to you, except as before the Whales should be boyl'd into Claret; all the Wine or Brandy that can come in from hence, will be but like a Summer Shower, which just sprinkles the Earth; but, with but a little Sunshine the Dust flies again presently, the immediate Damage is nothing, if you are not really stock-jobb'd out of your Estates, and out of your Senecs too; of which hereafter.

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